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Jailed Swiss spy conducts a phone-in

From Our Correspondent
Geneva, March 17

Mr Jean-Louis Jeanmaire, a former brigadier in the Swiss army now serving an 18-year sentence on charges of passing secrets to a succession of Soviet military attaches in Bern, has astounded the public by speaking live from prison on the main programme of Radio Suisse Romande.

His trial, in June 1966, was the high point of the most sensational espionage affair in Switzerland. Before retiring he had commanded civil defence troops.

A telephone call from Mr Jeanmaire to the presenter of a radio programme dealing with his case went straight on to the air in phone-in fashion. Mr Jeanmaire, now aged 71, asked that extracts from recorded interviews recently given to a press journalist should not be broadcast.

What was said in those interviews was intended for a book. It speaks differently for a book." The request was granted and the programme was shortened.

How he was able to telephone the radio station direct from prison has yet to be explained.

Jeanmaire is quoted as saying that the charges against him were trumped up because of personal rivalries and in order to pin upon the country that "the Russian enemy is at the gate."

He is also quoted as saying that he had signed a confession after lengthy interrogation when he was so morally and physically worn down as to be incapable of reading it. Interviews carried earlier in a Zurich newspaper are described as having been obtained when Mr Jeanmaire was "on Christmas parole".

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